

566 land fiefs in conquered territory, and he was, as special
 463 favor, permitted to wear the long cotton shirt, "qāmīa"

under the common shamma (toga), and over the old style nar-

• [292] rowing kneepants; cotton jodphurs and sandals remained the
 prerogative of feudal lords. Most of the skilled crafts-
 men never rose that high but spent their lives accompany-
 ing troops as tentmakers, carpenters, smiths, horn cup
 fashioners, tanners, or, at best, as silversmiths and em-
 broiderers of harness and saddle coverings for feudal chiefs.

181 The material culture of the Amhara (still continuing
 183 among the rural Amhara) is therefore a composite of the
 566 equipment of the settled peasant and of the formerly itiner-
 176 ant feudal lord and his troop of soldier-retainers and
 specialists (many of the latter from socially inferior eth-
 [754] nic groups). Moreover, the settled peasant feared not only
 the actual "evil eye" of the rapacious warlord, but also
 the spiritually conceived "evil eye". Both factors undoubt-
 edly contributed to the conservatism and the pattern of
 maximum utilization of natural products with a minimum of
 invention; leaving the exercise of ingenuity for other
 elaborations of culture.

1. Living Standards

A. The Rural Settlement:

621 The typical residential unit is the hamlet ("ṭis", or,
 if several on one large hill, "māndār"), rather than a vil-
 lage. The hamlet may consist of from two to a dozen huts,
 with the mode about five residential huts ("tuqul"). Thus
 the hamlet is often little more than an isolated or a semi-
 isolated farmstead, though another hamlet may occupy the
 other side of the same hill.

291 among peasant's weekday wear, and on the occasion of a peasant woman riding a mule (e.g. the bride being carried to the groom's hamlet). In the latter, somewhat tighter variety, it is called "lebaleba". Very recently, Sudanese-imported khaki shorts, British-type, have become popular among peasants for workaday wear, and are mass-produced by foot-operated Singer sewing machines at "big markets" of provincial town. This has changed the status of the male tailor to a full-time, urban occupation, carried on by a poor Amhara and only when he is far from the district of his own kinfolk, to avoid shaming them.

292 The wearing of the kneelength cotton shirt, formerly also of imported silk, the "qāmīs", was a special privilege granted by the king to his chief courtiers and feudal governors and lords. This meant that they did not have to bare the upper body even to their superiors, and could, when travelling, demand food supplied from any peasant for themselves and their troops. Now called "ej tābab" (narrow-sleeve) it is urban wear for the commoner, and even the peasant wears it when he is not at work as well as on festive occasions; It is always of cotton. The term "qāmīs" is now used only for the full-length, wider-sleeved gown of women, who like to have it embroidered with green, flowery designs on chest and back ("talf qāmīs"). Unlike the male shirt, it is worn all the way to the feet, and is tied around the waist with a thin strip of cloth.

[831] The "qāmīs" of women is almost untailored, for emphasizing body contours would be "shameful". It is full-

291 and women, as protection from rain and cold in the rainy season. Finely embroidered, it was also a garment of high prestige, since the king himself presented it to his liege lords from his own royal workshop, frequently made by imported artisans from the Middle East and their Abyssinian apprentices, often slaves. It is still worn by feudal lords in remote rural areas, but has to be bought from caravan traders who import it, though there are rumors that they were until recently still produced in the district of Bājāda in remote, mountainous Semyen sub-province.

292 The old prestige of the "burnos" lives on in the "kābā", the royal (hoodless) cape or mantle, of dark wool with embroidered stiff collar and borders, draped over the shoulders, and reaching to the ankles. This garment is still the prerogative of royalty, of nobility on festive occasions, and of priests. It was the garment seen in western newsreels at the time Emperor Haile Selassie wore it in Geneva and London, even with his European suit.

286 During the time of the roving Amhara feudal chiefs, even in Menslik's time, when capitals were no more than tent cities, carpet making was extensive. Some were used as tapestry, by the nobility. The best were imported, but there was considerable domestic production. A type called "kozē" was woven, surviving for a while in remote areas such as the aforementioned "Bājāda" district in Semyen, but not of any economic significance. It died out as an art, with the death of the old craftsmen, increase in imports, and the end of the tent cities. Cheap rugs have replaced the carpets, just as imported black chintz has replaced

792 Nunneries are similarly organized, headed by an abbess, but the average age is much higher, since becoming a nun is far less a career than becoming a monk, and typically chosen by women who have been unhappy in marriage or have been widowed. Virgin nuns are extremely rare.

There are also laywomen who serve as volunteers and for the occasional spiritual and temporal benefits that result from association with a large nunnery-monastery, which still represents a major business organization, trading post, produce and commodities exchange, etc. "Gabbar" sharecrop tenants supply cereals, services, etc.

• [292]

The baking is done largely by nuns and laywomen, who also cook and brew barley beer, and milk cows. The last is particularly essential on non-fast periods when milk consumption is permitted. Monastic rules are so severe, that no female animals are permitted inside the monk's area; no cows, mares, bitches, etc. This is the literalness with which the separation of the sexes is enforced!

Finally, there is a non-functional clergy, a relatively small number of hermits. They usually live under cave-ledges, near brooks, in forest land near monasteries. The monks come daily to bring them food, leaving it at a respectful distance. These hermits, called "bahetawi", are paradoxically regarded as "loving mankind", as praying for the well-being of all "orthodox"

792 believers, but as quick in anger when a human face disturbs their solitude. Legends tell of hermits who, receiving a "call", returned to the temporal world as prophets and leaders of men. But this is regarded as rare. During their lifetime the hermits are held in awe, and even after their death they are believed to haunt their earthy cave-ledges, so that passers-by talk in whispers only, and fear to come too close.

(d) Utensils of the Church.

793

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The headgear of the priests, "māṭāmāmiya", is a turban-like affair, basically a white muslin wrapped around the head or the cylindrical cap ("qob"). Monks wear the "qob" without the muslin, and, in many monasteries, used to dye their "qob" as well as their robes yellow. In recent years the yellow color is falling into disuse, and white--believed to be the color of mourning for the passing of Christ, is worn alternately with black caps and capes. Black is evidently due to acculturation. It first entered in the form of imported chintz capes for the bishops and upper clergy in the time of Menelik II, and has spread, due to the Italian occupation.

[822]

Like noblemen, middle and higher clergy wear the kaba, the heavy, woolen, sleeveless cape, and carry an especially good "qhera" (flyswitch) of guresa-monkey hair. Priests wear the narrow white jodphurs at all times,

713 beneath kneelength shirt ("qamis") and shamma; often
● 292 they wear sandals. They usually let a full beard grow
[293] as richly as it will. Another private symbol of priest-
ly nobility is an abbreviated "maqomya" leaning staff,
shorter, without crutch, topped by an ivory knob and equip-
ped as a walking stick, called "sande kahanat", with an
iron point at the bottom.

In church parades, priests and deacons add color-
fully embroidered garments of imported and embroidered
velvet, rayon, silk, brocade, etc., often cut like the
ancient leopard-skin in sleeveless capes which hang from
the shoulders over front and back. If of domestic origin,
the holy day garments are dyed black or red. Embroidery
is of gold or silver thread, and sometimes includes gold
or silver filigree plates in geometric patterns (e.g. the
[293] sun). On such occasions the ordinary sun umbrella ("jan-
tela") of reeds gives way to a colorful umbrella of im-
ported cloth, in which red and gold predominate. It is
now often attached to the ribs of a modern umbrella.
The black cape ("kaba") is held across the chest with a
metal (often silver) clasp or chain.

293
718 On such holy day parades, clergy and upper-class
persons married in a eucharistic ceremony ("qurban"),
wear the metal crown, "akili". This is one of the most
valuable of each church's possessions, always locked in
the church when not in use, usually donated by noble
sponsors. They are usually made of silver, or at least
of brass, and the older more traditional ones are shaped
in tiered stories of circles narrowing toward the top

796 down people and to the Christians of Constantinople.

779 Therefore, she ordered that a tall pole be erected, crowned with a burning torch, called "dämmära". The present procedure re-enacts this traditional tale, for on the afternoon preceding the 17th huge poles are stacked up, parades circle them, and in the evening the stacks are set afire, lighting up the landscape.

In preparation, some days before Masqal, peasants and townsmen go to the bush to cut long sticks, so that they will be dry in time. Pious persons touch them to the hearthstone and pray that the harvest will be good, • [292] so that they will not have to subsist on cabbage (the food of poverty). Even the poorest can bring the plentiful yellow "masqal" daisies, tied to the top of the poles. The stacks are formed on public areas, such as a marketplace, in front of the church, etc. Adults and children parade around them at least 3 times, wearing their best new garments and trinkets. This is an occasion for girls to be seen at their prettiest, and for young braves to boast.

Some of the young men form into groups and dance [535] the "hoya-hoya", refrains of past or future brave deeds. Warriors perform the loyalty jumping-dance shouting "Addis Ababa". Sometimes, when the resinous torches are lit, mock battles develop. Little girls dance rings-around-the-rosy, while little boys may take the occasion to burn scars on their forearms as proof of courage and to be "strong". Pious elders take a brand from the lit bonfire and rekindle their home hearths, in the hope of

CHURCH SERVICES.

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They say the prayers by heart and without light, except in the lamps or chandeliers, for they have not got lamps. They burn butter in these chandeliers, for they have not got oil. They pray or chaunt very loud, without art of singing, and they do not recite (alternate) verses, but all sing straight on. Their prayers are psalms, and on feast days besides psalms they recite prose, according as the feast is so is the prose. They always stand in the churches; at matins they only say one single lesson: this is said by a priest or a friar, rather shouted than intoned, and he reads this lesson before the principal entrance. When this lesson is finished, on Saturdays, Sundays, and feast days, they make a procession with four or five crosses on their poles, and a cross not so much raised as carried like a stick in the left hand, because they carry a thurible in the right hand, since as many as carry a cross carry a thurible, there are always as many thuribles as crosses. They wear some silk cloaks, not well made, because they are not wider than the width of a piece of damask, or other silk from top to bottom. Before the breast, a cross piece to the flanks on each side, of any other stuff and of any colour, even though it should not match the principal part, and of this principal part a good ell hangs behind dragging on the ground. They make this procession through the circuit, which is like a cloister. This being ended, on the said Saturdays, Sundays, and feasts, he who has to say mass enters with two others into the chancel; they bring out an effigy of Our Lady, which they have in ancient pictures in all churches and monasteries. He who has to say mass places himself in the centre of the transept with his face towards the principal entrance, and the image in his hands held before his breast: and those who stand by his sides hold lighted candles in their hands, and all the others commence a chaunt like prose, and all walk, shouting and leaping as if dancing¹ they hold hands and go round, before the

¹ Como em chacota, dancing and singing, i.e., not reverentially.

CHURCH SERVICES.

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house are the raisins from which the wine is made, and a machine for pressing. In this same house the blessed bread is made which is given away on Saturdays and Sundays and feast days; and on great feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, Our Lady of August, etc., they carry this bread of the sacrament with a pallium,¹ bell, and cross devoutly. Before they enter the church with it they go round the church by the circuit like a cloister; when it is not a feast they enter the church at once and without the pallium. On a Saturday before Ascension these friars made a procession; and from being in a new country it seemed to us very good, and they did it in this way. They took crosses, and the altar stone covered with a silk cloth, a friar carried it on his head, which was also covered with the said cloths; and they carried books and bells, and thuribles, and holy water; and all went chaunting to some millet fields: there they made their devotions and cries after the fashion of litanies, and with this procession they returned to the monastery. We asked why they did that, and they said that the animals ate their millet, and so they went to pour out holy water and pray God to drive them out. In this country, he that says the mass has no other difference from the deacon and sub-deacon in his vestments than a long stole with an opening in the middle to allow the head to pass through; before and behind it reaches to the ground. The friars say mass with hair on their heads; the priests do not wear hair, and are shaven and so say mass. Also, both friars and priests say mass barefooted, nobody enters the church with his feet shod, and they allege for this what God said to Moses: "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for thou art on holy ground."

¹ Under a canopy.

MONASTERY OF BISAN.

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monastery, most of them old men of great age, and as dry ⁷⁹²
 as wood; very few young men. This monastery is entirely
 surrounded by a wall, and this wall is closed with two ^[346]
 gates, which are always locked.

CAP. XIV.—*How the monastery of Bisan is the head of six
 monasteries, of the number of the brothers, and ornaments,
 of the "castar" which they do to Philip, whom they call
 a Saint.*

This monastery is the head of six monasteries, which are ⁷⁹²
 around it in these mountains; the furthest off is at a ¹⁹³
 distance of three leagues from it, and all are subject to it,
 and are governed and ruled by it. In each of them is a
 David, that is a guardian appointed by the Abbot or pro-
 vincial of this monastery, who is also David under the
 Abba. I always heard say that there were in this monastery ⁷⁹²
 three thousand friars, and because I doubted it much I
 came here to keep the feast of our Lady of August, in
 order to see if they would come together. Certainly I
 rejoiced to see the riches of this monastery, and the pro-
 cession which they made: in my judgment the friars did
 not exceed three hundred, and most of them were very old.
 There is a circuit to this monastery which surrounds the two ^[346]
 which are like cloisters covered in, and this one which is not
 covered in was on that occasion all covered in with brocades
 and inferior brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, all long
 pieces, sewn one to another in order that they might
 shelter the whole circuit. They made a very beautiful
 procession through this canopied circuit; all wore cloaks of ^[292]
 the same stuffs, brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, badly
 made as I mentioned above. They carried fifty small
 crosses of silver, of bad workmanship, and as many

Should be *teskar*.

another lord, who was named Adiby, who was now Bar-⁶⁴³
nagais. Beneath the Barnagais are some great lords whom⁶³¹
they call Xuums, which means captains; and these are, first,
Xuum Cire, a very great captaincy, he is now married to a
sister of Prester John. We never went to this country and
Xuumeta because it is distant and out of the way. There⁶⁴³
is another Xuumeta named Ceruil. We knew this lordship,⁷⁰¹
and they say that its Xuum brings into the field fifteen⁶³¹
thousand spearmen with shields and archers. Also Xuum
Cama, and Buno Xuum, and Xuum bono. These Xuumetas
had been one, and on account of its being large, and the
Prester having misgivings that they might set themselves
up against the Barnagais, he made it into two, and even
yet each of them is very large. They say that this lordship
which is now two was the dominion of Queen Candace,
without having been larger in her time. She was the first
Christian that there was in this country, and whom the
Lord called powerful. Also two other captaincies, one is
named Daffila, the other Canfila; these two border on
Egypt, and their captains are like lords of the marches.
All these captains before mentioned are of kettledrums,^[534]
which nobody except great lords can carry: and all these
serve with the Barnagais in wars when he goes to them, and
wherever he may go. They have other great gentlemen
under their command who are called Arraz,¹ which means
heads. We knew one of these, who was named Arraz
Aderaan, he is head over fifteen thousand men at arms,
whom they name chavas. I saw this Arraz Aderaan twice
at the court, both times I saw him before the gate of the^[292]
Prester John going without a shirt, and from his waist
downwards a very good silk cloth, and on his shoulders the
skin of a lion, in his right hand a spear, and in his left hand^[411]
a shield. I asked how it was so great a lord went
about in that manner, they told me that the greatest honour

¹ Arraz.

443 places which are chief towns of districts, every week. The fairs consist of bartering one thing for another, as for instance, an ass for a cow, and that which is of least value gives to the other two or three measures of bread. By means of bread they buy stuffs, and with stuffs they buy mules and cows, and whatever they want, for salt, incense, pepper, myrrh, camphor, and other small articles.¹ They buy fowls and capons, and whatever they need or want to buy is all to be found at these fairs in exchange for others, for there is no current money. The principal merchants at these fairs are priests, friars, and nuns. The friars are decent in their habits, which are full, and reaching to the ground. Some wear yellow habits of coarse cotton stuff, others habits of tanned goat skins like wide breeches,² also yellow. The nuns also wear the same habits; the friars wear, besides, capes of the fashion of Dominican friars, of the same yellow skins or stuffs, they wear hats; and the nuns wear neither capes nor hats, but [302] only the habit, and are shaven with a razor; and they wear a leather strap wound or fastened round the head. When they are old women they wear fillets³ round their heads over their tonsures. These nuns are not cloistered, nor do they live together in convents, but in villages, and in the monasteries of the friars, on account of belonging to those houses and order. The order is all one, and the nuns give obedience where they receive their habits. With regard to entering churches and monasteries, the nuns do not enter except as other women do. There is a great multitude of nuns, as well as of friars; they say that some of them are very holy women, and others are not so. The priests show very 793 little difference from the laity in their dress, because all 302 wear a good cloth wrapped round, like smart men, and their [292] difference is that they carry a cross in their hand, and are shaven, and the laity wear long hair. The priests also have

¹ *Bechugarias*.² *Zafius* or *Safius*.³ *Tufas*.

693 he hears the parties until he has determined upon it, and then he goes and relates the cause to the Barnagais, who gives the sentence: if it is a small cause, or if the parties wish it, the Alicaxi gives sentence, and the cause is concluded. Moreover, in all judgments, whether the Barnagais or the Alicaxi judges, there must be present an honourable man, whom they call by the name of his office Malaganha, who is like a tabellion or notary of Prester John, and if either of the parties wishes to appeal, he requires from this man the certifying of the cause for Prester John and his judges. All the lords of the countries of any of the kingdoms of Prester John have an Alicaxi and a Malaganha appointed by the Prester; so also have the captains subject to the Barnagais and to the other great lords. The gentlemen who are about the house of the Barnagais, and other grandees who come on business, have this manner of coming from their abodes. Whilst at the place he is living at he mounts his mule, seven, eight, or ten men on foot go before him as far as the first gate, and there he dismounts. If he is a person of greater importance, he takes seven, eight, or ten mules, or else three or four, according as the person is. So he dismounts at the first gate, and arrives at the second, after that, if they are bidden at once to enter, they go in, if not, they sit outside like beehives in the sun, without any other pastime. All these honourable persons wear sheep skins at

• [292] their necks or on their shoulders, and he who wears the skin of a lion, tiger, or ounce, is more honourable. When

576 they come before the lord they take off the skin, as we take off our caps. Whilst we were in this town of Barra on a

721 market day, they made a solemn proclamation that the Barnagais intended to make war on the Nobiiis, five or six days' journey from the limits of his country, towards Egypt, neighbouring to the countries of Canfilla and Dafolha,¹ which are subject to the Barnagais, as I have before mentioned.

and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of 796
 the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry. [792]
 canons and priests do so. When the canons live together 793
 in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in
 community. The chiefs of these churches are called Lica-
 canate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the
 circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a
 canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except
 he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any
 church, they live on the large properties which the churches
 and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy [694]
 are dealt with before the secular justice.

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a 292
 hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no
 maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have [302]
 their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say
 mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with
 their heads bare.

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is 794
 said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies,
 the priests come with cross and holy water and incense,
 and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to
 burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the
 churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them.

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he 643
 always goes about the country in tents, and he will always
 have in his camp five or six tents among good and common
 ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the 644
 horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards.

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot
 behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner:
 all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of
 very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring
 them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which
 covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

BOOKS VII. AND VIII.

75

The principal revenue of the clergy is the presents made by those who are sick, or dying. 794

The dress of the Acab saat is a purple burnoose, with a white turban, not unlike the Turkish Imams, or a white handkerchief hanging loose behind. The Kees hatze is the king's official confessor, official Alaka of the church of Tecla-haimanout, and curator of the two churches of Gondar. 292

The Abuna's words of absolution, in a case of excommunication, is, "Gzier ephiac," God absolve thee. [783]

Women, after having born a son, are excluded from the church 40 days, and if a daughter, 80. The really married are those who receive the sacrament on that occasion. Persons who have been connected with any woman, are excluded from church during three days; if that connection has been promiscuous, they are excluded seven; and then even admitted to receive the sacrament. If a man, really married, is guilty with another's wife, he is not debarred a longer period. Women in the menses are not allowed to enter the church till seven days afterwards. Circumcision is performed on the eighth, and baptism is celebrated on the forty-first day of the child's age. On all the fore-mentioned occasions they only come within the inner precinct, and kiss the walls and door-posts of the church. The clergy are rigid in these matters, and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the churches are ill-attended. It is their only duty; the monks making no scruple of confessing that they cannot enter the church, for that day they had to do with a woman, which is not attended with any impeachment. 796 784 [841] [304] [852]

Geography and revenue of Abyssinia.—The Iteghe from Bure in two days arrived at Metchakel, in her way to Gojam; It may be about as far as from this (Gondar) to Caroota; I suppose from 30 to 32 miles at farthest. From Metchakel to Nazarit six days easy journey; from 10 to 12 miles, I suppose, *per diem*. Gojam here belongs to Ayto Aylo, son of Ozoro Welleta Israel. The Galla are Toluma. The Galla who border on Amhara are much the worst of all the Galla, and the least worst are the Edjow east of them, bordering upon Begemder and Angot, called Guangoul Galla. Those near Amhara are Wutchali, Woolo, Amito, and Toluma; 131 361 101

SOME OF THEIR HABITS & CUSTOMS. 75

main purpose, but of course they cannot be closed up. 293
 Ordinary umbrellas are never used by the Abyssinians, though huge and brilliant coloured umbrellas are used by priests and other important personages on ceremonial occasions.

On feast days the chiefs and other functionaries at Court change their cotton shirt for one of silk or satin, gorgeously embroidered in gold and silver, and in various colours. And finally a pelerine of bright-coloured cloth of velvet, or, better still, of lion or black leopard skin ornamented in silver and silver-gilt, is permitted to be worn by those only whom it is desired to distinguish on account of specially meritorious conduct, generally in war. 292

The full-dress costume of a Ras or Dejazmach, with 293
 bristling lion's mane head-dress, velvet cape with lion's mane collar, embroidered in gold and silver-gilt, and gala shield and sword-sabbard covered with velvet and embossed with silver-gilt ornamentation, is a really magnificent one, and the appearance of Dejazmach Nado, the envoy to King George in 1919, at Buckingham Palace in this dress caused quite a sensation.

Mention must also be made of one article which is 301
 an indispensable adjunct to the dress of every Christian 778
 Abyssinian, and that is the *matab*, a silken cord carrying an amulet or charm, which is worn round the neck as the badge of their faith.

The gentler sex affect as much jewellery of all sorts, 301
 bracelets, rings, anklets, necklaces, earrings, etc., as they are able to procure; these are of native make as already described. As a general rule they have extraordinarily small *attaches*, and of all the native bracelets that we collected in and round Addis Ababa none

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565 The ultimate model for these constellations of servants and retainers was, of
 [644] course, the imperial court. The *makuännent* imitated the behavior of the emperor as much as it was within their means, prerogatives, and sense of discretion to do so. Thus, like the emperor, a nobleman never traveled on foot, but
 [492] on the back of a caparisoned mule; with as many retainers as possible, shouldering spears or rifles, on the run behind him. He enjoyed a number of quasi-royal privileges: the authority to have cattle slaughtered and to have *tajj* prepared in his home; the right to wear a *barnos*, the dark wool cloak of the nobility; the use of an imported parasol, though not of the scarlet color reserved for the emperor, and of the horsehair fly-switch. In general, the Abyssinian noble attempted to behave like a king in his own sphere of influence and to reproduce in his own court that of the emperor. As d'Abbadie noted:

A lord of even mediocre importance names his seneschal, his provost, his guards, a foreman of domestics, a chief baker, a butler, a squire, and various captains and pages; then he sets up a hierarchy often in ridiculous disproportion to his position; his inferiors do the same, and there is no one down to the well-to-do peasant who does not institute certain offices and analogous grades in his home. The Ethiopians often laugh about it themselves.²²

565 A passion for acquiring titles is the obverse of the Abyssinian's penchant for
 554 instituting offices and grades. A man's title, *ya-mä'erg sem* ("name of rank"), has been the major indicator of the deference which is due him. Honorific titles and the paraphernalia appropriate to them are perhaps the most sought after possessions in traditional Abyssinia, for they confer inalienable status. Even if fate should deprive a man of all his wealth and power, he would retain his title until death. If he should become a prisoner, he would be given deferential treatment.

565 The titles of the nobility were, first and foremost, military titles. The
 554 *makuännent* were above all an elite of war lords; and in contemporary
 701 Amharic the term *makuännent* (singular *makonnen*) is also used to refer to any commissioned military officer. Their principal ranks, in descending order, are:

<i>räs</i>	"head" (of an army)
<i>dajäzmä'tch</i>	"general of the (king's) gate"
<i>fitäw'räri</i> *	"general of the vanguard"
<i>qaññäzmä'tch</i>	"general of the right wing"
<i>geräzmä'tch</i>	"general of the left wing"
<i>bälämbäräs</i>	"commander of a fort"
<i>bäshät</i>	"commander of a rifle corps"
<i>shälaqä</i>	"chief of a thousand"

* In former times the *fitäw'räri* ranked below the *geräzmä'tch*.

[192]† *Bäshä* is a Turkish loan word, introduced after the Turko-Abyssinian wars.

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793 preme judges at the royal court, and the *aqābē sa'āt* ranked third—in some
644 lists, first—in the official order of precedence of all court dignitaries.⁴⁰

[693] One other church dignitary, finally, was the *nebra ed*, chief of the sacred district of Aksum, who always enjoyed a high position at the royal court. When appointed by the emperor (instead of by the provincial governor who sometimes possessed that authority), the *nebra ed* enjoyed the rare privilege of being permitted to sit while speaking in the event of his involvement in litigation.

793 The status of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries was based on approxi-
554 mately the same factors as those which determined the status of secular nobility: royal favor; family background, in the case of those whose fathers were important nobles or noted churchmen; and the possession of wealth, political power, and imposing titles.⁴¹ The same was true of their regional counterparts, the *alaqā*, "chiefs" of large churches and monasteries, whose wealth, power, and leisurely mode of life gave them, in Plowden's opinion, "perhaps the most enviable position in Abyssinia."⁴²

793 The status of the clergy as a whole, however, rested on three other principles which are not affected by royal favor, birth, or worldly possessions.
792 These were: contact with the most sacred symbols of religious authority;
554 ascetic piety; and religious learning. Broadly speaking, in Abyssinia these three principles have been embodied primarily in three distinct roles, namely, those of priest, monk, and *dabtārā*.

793 A normal preparation for these roles—necessarily so, in the case of the
794 priesthood—is service as a deacon. Ability to read is, now as before, a requisite qualification for the diaconate, but that requirement has in the past often been overlooked. More important has been the requirement of ordination by the *abuna*. Ordination formerly took place in the company of hundreds of other aspirants and, when there was uncertainty about the future availability of an *abuna*, even babes in arms were admitted.⁴³

794 The traditional garb of the deacon is a yellowish cape made of sheepskins,
292 though on holidays the officiating deacons may be dressed in richly colored silk robes like the priests. The duties of the deacon—and they are accounted great and secret privileges—are to prepare the sacramental bread, fetch the holy water, and assist at the Mass (the performance of which normally requires two priests and three deacons).

793 On reaching puberty a deacon is no longer supposed to serve in the church,
794 for fear that he will become "impure." At that time he may decide to prepare for the priesthood. For this two qualifications must be met. He must have completed his study of reading and, ideally, of *zēmā*, the chants that are intoned in the liturgy of the Mass. These matters he may learn from the older clergy during his service as a deacon, or from his father, who, in many cases, is a priest himself. Otherwise, he goes off in search of a master. He

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builds a tiny thatch hut near the home of his tutor, wears ragged, unshorn 793
sheepskins, and gets his meals by begging. He lives thus for a year or two, 794
until he has mastered the fourteen varieties of chants used in the various
masses, and perhaps special chants like the *Praise of Mary* (*Weddässē Māry-
ām*) which are sung on holidays.

The other, and more important, qualification for the priesthood is marriage
according to the law of the church. After a deacon has been married in the
customary manner and lived with his wife for at least forty days, their mar-
riage must be solemnized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thereafter he
may not divorce her or remarry if she dies.

With these conditions satisfied, the candidate for priesthood may travel to 793
the *abuna* and be ordained. He acquires thereby the power to bind and to
absolve, and is granted full knowledge of the mysteries of the *tābot*. The
new priest attaches himself to a church, and is given his share of the monthly
assignments for conducting the Mass. This is his main responsibility, though
as he grows older he will also acquire confessants to whom he will give
advice and assign penances.

Apart from these duties, the life of an Abyssinian priest in many ways
resembles that of his lay neighbors. He plows his fields and harvests his crops.
He may do business at the markets, or add to his income by weaving. Per-
haps the chief difference in his manner of life is the habit of spending time in
the "gate of peace," a little building near the church where the clergy assem-
ble after services for hours of drinking *ṭallā* and idle conversation.

In reward for his services—and this is normally the chief inducement to
become a priest—the priest is given a share of the revenues in kind brought
in from lands owned and managed by the church. He may also be given
some land owned by the church to cultivate for himself. In addition, he 793
receives gifts in kind from his confessants periodically, is entitled to take 292
part in the various feasts to which priests are regularly invited, and is likely 293
to receive some bequest from time to time. 778

The insignia of the priest are modest, but they suffice to inform the stranger 793
that here is a man to be shown special respect: a white turban wrapped 292
around the head and a cross carried in the hand, to be kissed by all comers. 293
Older priests often carry a fly-whisk made of horsehair, and a wicker sun 778
umbrella.

Though there are devout and kindly men among them, the Ethiopian 793
priests have never been particularly noted for their moral qualities. Often they
are ungenerous and scheming, and ready to exploit their position at the ex-
pense of the laity. They are poorly educated in their own tradition, stuttering

* A sheep, or at least a sheepskin—insurance that the Memorial Mass will be properly per-
formed on the fortieth day after the donor's death.

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793 and misreading sacred texts in a language they have never understood. They
 (293) are notorious drinkers, so much so that a modern Ethiopian novelist has one of his characters, a priest, ask: "If one stops drinking, what else is left in this world?"⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the prestige of the priests was unassailable in Amhara culture. Whatever their personal life, they represented the value of ritual sanctity, which made it possible for the Mass to be performed in the local churches. So long as they had been duly ordained and did not break their lawful marriage bond, they were part of a sacred class. Combes and Tamisier remarked upon this in the 1830's:

Despite all their vices, these priests manage to make themselves respected; when they pass along the roads, the faithful bow deeply to them, and in no matter what gathering they appear, everyone rises and hurries to kiss their hands.⁴⁵

793 Privileged contact with the sacred symbols of the church—ordination by the
 798 sacrosanct *abuna*, exclusive access to the *tābot*, and officiation at the Eucharist—gave the priests an authority that was independent both of political dispensation and of personal accomplishment.

793 Other groups within the clergy have been highly esteemed for quite different
 792 reasons. Those who become monks carry great weight because they embody the virtue of ascetic piety. The *dabtarā*, on the other hand, are respected for their erudition.

792 Monks usually come from two kinds of background: unwed deacons desiring to spend their lives as monks, and priests whose wives have died. But previous ecclesiastical connection is not necessary for the monastic calling, nor is the ability to read required. The essential qualification is the willingness to renounce the world. The word for becoming a monk (*manakwasa*) means to renounce earthly things. A prospective monk may be of the sort described by one of Walker's informants:

An old man who has married many wives and divorced them one by one, may say, "Henceforth it suffices me! Let the world remain lost to me! I am to turn my face to God!"⁴⁶

In earlier times the monastic life was sought by men from all walks of life, including lords, soldiers, even emperors, in consequence of some grievous affliction, or perhaps a vow made in time of trouble, or excessive *Weltschmerz*.

Heads of monasteries have the jurisdiction to confer the monastic status. One who desires this status bequeathes his worldly possessions and goes through a ceremony in the church in which his body is declared dead. The
 • (292) symbol of the monastic state is a little cloth skullcap (*askēma*). Once he has become a monk, an Ethiopian is a legal nonentity. This frees him from all

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793 The *dabtarā*'s way of life is more variable than that of the monk, his possibilities for income more diverse than those of the priest. He may be attached to a church as a chorister and receive a share of the church's revenues, as do the priests. Or he may donate his services to the church and earn his living
 (212) by secular employment. He may work as a scribe at the court of a king or nobleman. He may spend most of his time teaching, gaining support from some large church or monastery. Like many priests he may cultivate land.
 (434) In any case, he is likely to derive some income from the sale of amulets and from medical therapies. Some *dabtarā* are even said to have wandered about the country as hunters, performing magical services for clients as they go.

- (292) *Dabtarā* are not set off from the populace by special insignia. Some wind a turban around their heads, as do many priests; but others may dress like ordinary peasants. If holding more prestigious posts they may be seen with fly-whisks or wearing a *barnos*. But they are known by the people, who fear and respect them. They are feared because of their magical powers, which
 (789) are believed capable of rendering bullets harmless and turning *injarā* to dust.
 (554) They are respected because of their learning, for they are the only educated status group in traditional Amhara society. If the commoner's relatively
 (195) impulsive *manner* of speaking is contrasted with the quiet reserve of the nobility, his relatively simple *language* is contrasted with that of the *dabtarā*, who is noted for a studied and circumspect use of language (*qāla-dabtarā*) and for larding his Amharic with literary (i.e., Ge'ez) expressions (*ya-dabtarā amārīññā*).

793 In the case of the religious elite, then, status is in all cases achieved. While
 554 there is a natural tendency for sons of priests and *dabtarā* to follow their
 183 fathers' example, they arrive at the status in question only by fulfilling the same norms that are applied to the sons of laymen. These norms, however, differ among the different groups within the clergy. Investiture by an authority emanating from the seat of religious charisma, the Alexandrine Patriarchate; and the related ritual requirement of marriage with Communion, were the basis of priestly status, almost irrespective of the personal attainments of the candidate. Personal attainments were *all* that mattered, on the other
 (792) hand, in the case of monk and *dabtarā*, but they differed radically for the two statuses.

793 The qualifications and characters of monks and *dabtarā* are almost dia-
 792 metrically opposed. The monastic state is entered only by means of a sacred
 554 rite; the *dabtarā* is in no way ordained, and might even be a "defrocked" priest. The monk's life is normally given to sensual renunciation; the *dabtarā* is normally an acknowledged sensualist (as appears, for example, in the proverb *ka-mesā ya-talaya dabtarā / yādargāl serā* ["a *dabtarā* who is kept from lunch / will work intrigues"]⁴⁸ and in stories which celebrate the *dabtarā*'s use of his knowledge for private erotic ends). In the monk the virtue

- *753 and sexually ambiguous roles. The other, predominantly
*787 female, members of his hadra treat him as an equal,
776 rather than with the deference ordinarily shown men.
562
- [292] What is more, his shame is public, since the zars gener-
ally demand as a sign of obeisance that a colored bor-
der be woven into the normally undecorated white toga
of Amhara men.
- *753 The type of practitioner that a client consults
*755 influences the final etiology with which his disease epi-
*756 sode is finally rationalized. In the context of category
*793 three ailments, the awakiy debtera is a morally correct
choice for the male client, since his therapy is capable
of translating the disease episode into a confirmation
of the client's normative social state. Failing more
innocuous indications (generally involving ganels), the
debtera's diagnosis and cure are expected to support an
etiology of sorcery or poisoning. This marks the sick-
man as someone's talat; a man someone wishes to kill or
maim in retribution or fear; a man who has incurred a
talat's interest by demonstrating aggressive and proud
(i.e., masculine) behavior, by committing assault and
murder, by usurping land rights, or by contesting sexual
access to women.